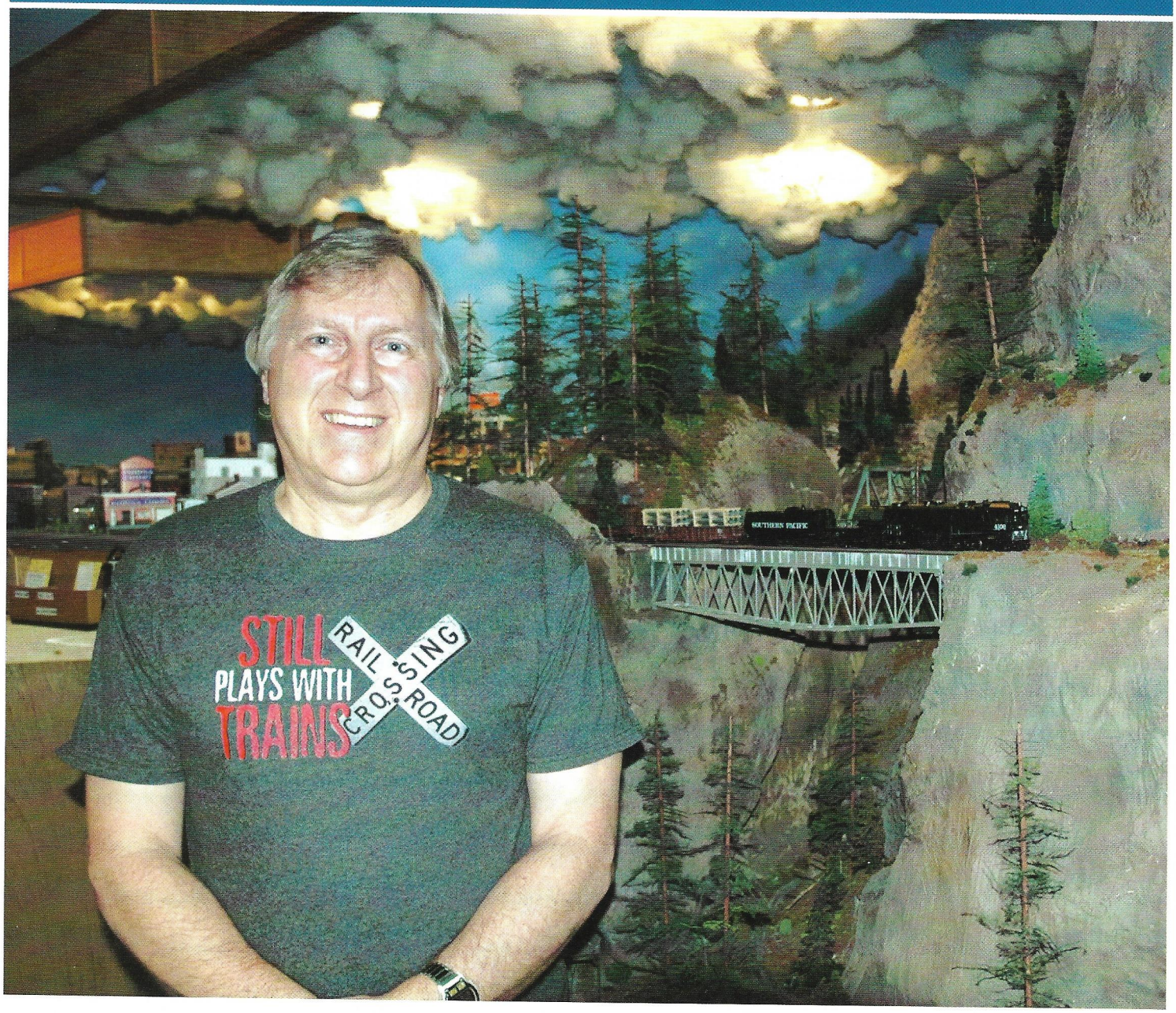


**David Yadock Earns MMR® #590**

Like most model railroaders, I started in this hobby when I was 6 or 7 years old. I admired the family Lionel train set racing around the Christmas tree every year. Lionel had a unique gift of making trains interesting as well as dependable. At that early age, I had a fascination with the way the trains operated and the different cars on the train. I probably got that fascination from my father. He did passenger car lighting design work for American Car & Foundry in Berwick, Pennsylvania. He later migrated to freight car design work when passenger car production started to wane.

I eventually received an HO train set as a Christmas present. From that small nucleus of one diesel locomotive and three cars grew my interest in model railroading. Freight cars, track, and locomotives were added over the years with a goal in mind of creating a layout that would be all that I wanted it to be. Well, in my pre-teen years, that didn't happen since space and money just wasn't there to build such a layout. The dream stayed a dream.

During my teenage years, I collected some more freight cars and a few locomotives. Back in the early 1970s, there was a good assortment of inexpensive items available. Yes, they were "shake-the-box" cars, but they were affordable to a teenager with a few dollars. Mantua, Life-Like, Athearn, and AHM were the mainstay of my fleet. Sure, the locomotives ran rough on solid brass Code 100 track and were noisy, but I was cementing a hobby that would stick with me. The dream was still a dream.

One thing I did learn was I couldn't build a layout without information. Yes, I read many of the model railroad publications that were available at the time, but they provided only bits and pieces of information in a one-directional format. An article in a magazine can only explain how to construct or create something, but it precludes the ability of the reader asking questions pertinent to his or her given situation. This aspect is important since I think part of this hobby is to share modeling experiences and information, as well as to learn from others.

Of course, during my college years, the model railroad hobby was put on hiatus, but I fed my interest by occasionally reading rail-

road books and magazines. I culled prototype and modeling information from many books. This "armchair" daydreaming was extremely helpful in deciding my interests in both model railroading in general and what path my future layout would take. I admit seeing photos of the various early modeling greats pushed me in my current direction. Magazine photos of John Allen's Gorre & Daphetid or Frank Ellison's Delta Lines cemented how I wanted to present my layout and what it would look like. Photos that Ben King took using his modified pinhole camera inspired me to want to take images equaling that quality. Jack Work's article showing the construction of his king post bridge made me want to pursue a higher level of detail in my layout work. My eventual goal was to have a detailed layout that looked realistic both in photographs and in person.

After giving much thought, I decided not to build a layout based on a prototype railroad but on one I made up (sort of). This choice was based on the reality that visitors to the layout would always look for scenes from the actual prototype. Making this decision was difficult with many twists and turns since I liked several prototype roads, including Pennsylvania Railroad, Lehigh Valley, Western Pacific, and Northern Pacific. The tiny Uintah railroad captured my interest as well. I admit this was kind of an odd bunch of prototypes to draw from for a layout! It was kind of an East Coast versus West Coast debate. I liked the sheer size of motive power fleets of the eastern railroads, as well as the endless possibilities of scenic grandeur with the Western roads. As much as I wanted to capture the modeling of a prototype, I migrated further away from that direction. I felt the restrictions of a prototype road would limit me and my soon-to-be-explored creativity. The decision to create a fictitious railroad was cast.

As mentioned earlier, I admired John Allen's layout. His use of color, texture, detail, and magical trickery in producing a scale world inspired me. His fictitious railroad was presented in such a way that it captured the feel of a prototype mountain railroad tackling a high mountain range. That soon became my goal. I liked the idea of a not-too-wealthy railroad using every bit of knowhow to move freight across a high mountain range.

I looked at John Allen's track plan and liked quite a bit of it. It suited most of what I wanted in a railroad. I admit I took bits and pieces of his plan and adapted it. Track was shifted or modified, places rearranged, and new track was added where I thought it would look and function better for my purposes. I had plenty of time to make this adaptation since I still didn't have space or money to create my "dream layout." This planning took several more years!

Luckily, I have a wonderful wife who allowed me to go forward with my dream. Wendy has been a sort of cheerleader for me. She encouraged me even though she is not really interested in model trains. She can't help it; she likes cats more than trains!

Eventually, I built a basement for a train layout with a house above it. The fictitious mountain railroad named Dry Gulch & Western was born. It is an HO and HOn3 monster engulfing about 800 square feet. Agreeably, it had many starts and stops along the way. It has undergone several changes from its original plan, but the dream is becoming a reality.

Once I started building my layout, all the reading I had done earlier in my life paid off — up to a point. Questions came up but finding the answers was difficult or tedious. I discovered the NMRA and became a member. I wasn't too involved with the organization early on since I had many other commitments occupying my time. Finally, I decided to participate by attending some local clinics and meetings. Several people welcomed me into the organization, such as Ed and Ken Liesse. JJ Johnston headed one of the local clinics and was especially inviting and gracious. Over the years, I have fostered many more friendships from both local modelers and those from afar. They have helped with providing me information, answering my odd questions, or teaching me skills I didn't even know I had! That is one of the many advantages of the NMRA.

I began competing in our local clinics "model of the month" competition. I didn't win at first but was able to hone my skills to start winning eventually. Carefully looking at all the details that went into a winning model showed me what I needed to do. The "model of the month" pushed me to build structures or other components on my layout at a much faster pace since I wanted to enter a model for the next month's competition. This activity became the entry point into working for my MMR®. Di Voss, MMR® was looking at my detailed model of Jack Work's king post bridge and suggested I use it to get my Structures certificate. I did, and there was no looking back.

Jack Hamilton, MMR® was instrumental in explaining that obtaining an MMR® is not a paperwork nightmare. Frank Dekker and Russ Segner allowed me to manage our local train show at the Pacific Science Center. I soon became a member of our Division BOD. Doing this broadened my scope of what the NMRA is as an organization and its many members. It really isn't just a bunch of folks "playing with trains." It is a group of people who are interested in promoting the hobby through their knowledge.

Since I had been working on my layout for quite a few years, a lot of my MMR® certificates were already completed, and I didn't even know it. Obtaining my MMR® took some effort, but it was rewarding. I learned a great deal from many wonderful model railroaders. While I was working toward my MMR®, I began to spread my acquired knowledge about tips and tricks I have stumbled upon along the way. Many model railroaders don't understand that some of the things that they do all the time may be entirely new for other modelers! I learned how to give clinics and compose how-to articles for publication, which helped me obtain my Author certificate. Yes, the first time I stood up in front of a crowd was scary, but conducting a clinic is an excellent way to learn. The learning can go both ways: the folks in the audience can learn from the presenter, and if the audience asks good questions, the presenter can learn from the audience.

Other certificates followed. My last certificate was Cars. Even though it took nearly three years to get to that point, it only took a very short time to build the freight cars for my certificate. All the skills I garnered along the way made the final certificate very easy to accomplish.

You could say that working toward an MMR® takes some effort, but it is also rewarding. Learning new skills, meeting new model railroaders, gaining new friends, and helping teach others is a very important aspect of this wonderful hobby. Working toward an MMR® is one way of promoting the hobby of model railroading and becoming a better modeler.

**Certificates Earned**
**David Yadock, MMR® 590**

**Association Volunteer**
**Model Railroad Engineer - Electrical**
**Model Railroad Engineer - Civil**
**Model Railroad - Author**
**Master Builder - Cars**
**Master Builder - Structures**
**Master Builder - Scenery**